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Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 08598 092243Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------070028 092246Z /64
O 092201Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4050
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
USUN PRIORITY 5817
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 8598

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1 AND 2
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, PINT, LE, IS, US, SY
SUBJECT: LEBANESE CRISIS - WEIZMAN AND THE CHRISTIANS

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 8595; (C) STATE 172809; (C) BEIRUT 3825;
(D) STATE 172816; (E) BEIRUT 3826

1. HAVE TALKED THREE TIMES TODAY (SUNDAY, JULY 9) WITH WEIZMAN ABOUT ALARMING INDICATIONS WE HAVE PICKED UP THAT CHRISTIAN LEADERS, ESPECIALLY BACHIR GEMAYEL, SEEM TO BE STILL "LOOKING FOR A FIGHT". I BRIEFED WEIZMAN AT LENGTH ON BASIS OF REFS B, C, D, AND E, MAKING POINTS IN PARA 4 OF REF B, AND STRESSING IMPORTANCE OF GETTING CLEAR MESSAGE TO BACHIR AND COMPANY THAT GOI WILL NOT RPT NOT PULL THEIR CHESTNUTS OUT OF THE FIRE IF THEY GO AFTER THE SYRIANS. QUERIED WEIZMAN AS TO WHETHER GOI IS PLANNING TO MEET FACE-TO-FACE WITH CHRISTIAN LEADERS TO DRIVE THIS POINT HOME.

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2. WEIZMAN ASSURED ME TONIGHT THAT HE HAS SENT TWO CLEAR, FIRM MESSAGES IN PAST 15 HOURS. IN GREAT CONFIDENCE HE SAID THAT INDEED THEY HAD TRIED TO SET UP A MEETING FOR TONIGHT. IT HAD ABORTED, HOWEVER, APPARENTLY BECAUSE "IT WAS TOO DIFFICULT FOR THE CHRISTIANS TO GET OUT OF THEIR HOLES". NO MEETING IS NOW LIKELY FOR NEXT 48 HOURS, HE SAID. NEVERTHELESS, HE AGREED THOROUGHLY THAT CHRISTIANS MUST KEEP THEIR COOL, AND

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SAID ISRAELIS WERE SENDING JUST THIS MESSAGE REPEATEDLY.

3. WEIZMAN SAID MAIN CURRENT QUESTION ON CHRISTIAN MINDS IS WHETHER SARKIS WILL RESIGN OR NOT. THEY SAY HE IS INSISTING ON NEED TO DISARM MILITIAS IF HE STAYS IN OFFICE -- AND "THERE IS JUST NO CHANCE THEY WILL AGREE TO DO SO." IMPLICATION HIS REMARK WAS THAT CHRISTIANS WERE LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT SARKIS' REMAINING IN OFFICE.

4. IN RESPONSE TO A LEADING COMMENT OF MINE, WEIZMAN ADMITTED THAT ISRAELI SHIPS HAD DELIVERED SUPPLIES TO CHRISTIANS A COUPLE OF NIGHTS AGO -- AND PERHAPS SOLDIERS FROM THE SOUTH AS WELL. HE DENIED CONVINCINGLY THE SUGGESTION THAT IDF TROOPS INVOLVED.

5. MY STRESS ON BACHIR AS FLASH POINT AMONG CHRISTINAS ELICITED NO DENIAL -- RATHER, I THOUGHT, TACIT AGREEMENT.

6. WEIZMAN SAID HE WANTED TO REVIEW PICTURE AGAIN WITH ME TOMORROW MORNING. MEANWHILE, HE REMAINS WORRIED, AND YET SEEMS IN NO WAY EAGER TO GET INTO THE FRAY, EITHER DIRECTLY OR BY PROXY.

7. EARLIER TODAY I REVIEWED WHOLE LEBANESE MESS WITH FORMER MEMBER OF

EX-PRIME MINISTER RABIN'S STAFF WHO WAS PRIVY TO ALL EARLIER UNDERSTANDINGS BETWEEN GOI AND GEMAYELS AND CHAMOIMISTS.

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HE INSISTS THAT IT WAS CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THAT GOI WOULD NOT RPT NOT INTERVENE MILITARILY IF CHRISTIANS EVER GOT IN TOO DEEP AS RESULT THEIR OWN ACTIONS. ONLY GOI COMMITTMENTS WERE FOR MATERIAL SUPPORT AND TRAINING, IN EXCHANGE FOR SHARED INTELLIGENCE RELATIONSHIP. HE WORRIES NOW, HOWEVER, ABOUT BEGIN GOVERNMENT'S POSSIBLE ACTIONS IF SYRIAN OPERATION BEGINS AGAIN -- SINCE BEGIN HAS MADE EXPLICIT AND PUBLIC THE KINDS OF MORAL ASSURANCES WHICH WERE CAREFULLY KEPT SECRET BY RABIN ET AL -- PRECISELY TO AVOID EMOTIONAL PRESSURES FOR ISRAELI INTERVENTION AT TIME OF CRISIS FROM FORCING GOVERNMENT'S HAND.
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